

**SENATE BILL 96
TESTIMONY OF JEFFREY MATCHETT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF POLICE UNIONS
AFSCME, COUNCIL 15
BEFORE THE LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE OF
THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

FEBRUARY 10, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee, my name is Jeffrey Matchett, and I am Executive Director of AFSCME Council 15, a labor union representing the interests of more than 4000 police officers in 62 municipal communities throughout Connecticut.

We are opposed to the passage as it is currently written of SB 96 – AN ACT CONCERNING TERMINATION WITHOUT CAUSE FOR CERTAIN OFFICERS IN MUNICIPAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS.

The bill proposes, as written, to give all police officers the right to “just cause” termination whether or not they are members of a collective bargaining unit.

It poses two problems as we see it. First, it would give probationary employees, who are typically at-will employees who may be terminated for any reason during a probationary period, the potential right to a “just cause” termination. This could harm public safety by making it more difficult for police departments to end relationships with those probationary employees who do not make the grade.

Secondly, the bill, as proposed would provide “just cause” rights to employees who typically can only gain those rights through collective bargaining. We think that it would weaken the incentive for police officers to join collective bargaining units, and at the same time, weaken unions and strengthen employers in the collective bargaining arena, thus having a negative fall-out effect upon the wages, benefits, and working conditions of all police officers.

It is important for police officers to be compensated fairly, and to work in a safe and acceptable work environment, not only because it is the humane thing to do, but also because it helps ensure public safety and eliminates the temptation of corruption which so frequently haunts public safety agencies that do not maintain strong collective bargaining rights.

We believe that the original intent of this bill was to protect deputy chiefs, or other second-in-command positions which do not have the statutory right to join unions. We support “just cause” protections for these positions which are usually filled by union members who have risen through the ranks. In order to make these positions attractive to the best employees, we believe that “just cause” rights are necessary and appropriate, and we support legislation which would protect these employees.